



PROMOTIONAL EVENT IDEAS

MEDIA OUTREACH

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Whether this is your first or 15th year participating in **National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month)**, the special events and activities you hold this September make an important contribution to raising year-round awareness of the issues surrounding alcohol and drug use disorders and recovery. With the help of individuals and organizations like yours, **Recovery Month** becomes more and more successful with each passing year.

This year's theme is **"Join the Voices for Recovery...Now!"** It encourages everyone to take that first step toward breaking the silence and eliminating the stigma surrounding alcohol and drug use disorders: celebrating the stories of those in recovery. It calls attention to those who have overcome denial, stigma, and other barriers to recovery, and who, as a result, are leading healthy and productive lives. Individuals in recovery are a true testament to the positive impact of treatment. Increasing access to such treatment is the focus of **Access to Recovery**, a new initiative announced by President Bush in 2003 to help people who want to get off drugs secure the best treatment options available to meet their specific needs, so they can rejoin their families, their communities, their jobs, and their lives.

There are a number of ways you can help spread these messages in your community, including planning media events, community forums, and other activities. Please consider the ideas listed below as your starting point for holding events and activities in September as well as throughout the year. The tips provided are designed to help you maximize the success of your programs.

How Can I Use a Media Event to Spread the **Recovery Month** Message?

Inviting media representatives in your community to attend a **Recovery Month** press event can lead to local media coverage about the importance of treating alcohol and drug use disorders, and the benefits of recovery. Successful media events contain two key elements that draw attention: a focus on a specific newsworthy activity and the involvement of prominent speakers from the community.

Newsworthy activities could include:

- The opening of a new treatment center
- The release of a new study
- The launch of an event (such as a run/walk)
- A government official's issuance of a civic proclamation
- A community forum in which local leaders address alcohol and drug use disorder issues in your community

15TH ANNUAL

National Alcohol
& Drug Addiction
Recovery Month

SEPTEMBER 2004



PROMOTIONAL EVENT IDEAS

MEDIA OUTREACH

Participants in a press event could include the mayor, governor, community leaders, and noted citizens in recovery from your area. Individuals in recovery can say a few words, introduce the event, take part in a ribbon-cutting ceremony, or signal the start of a race.

One way to engage the governor, mayor, or other elected official in your event is to ask the official to issue a proclamation in celebration of this year's **Recovery Month** theme (sample proclamations are included in this planning toolkit). You also can use this opportunity to recognize community leaders who have worked on behalf of these issues by providing them with certificates of recognition/appreciation.

At your press event, distribute press kits to members of the media. Press kits should include a press release, speaker biographies, and fact sheets about the issue and your organization (a sample press release and fact sheets are included in this planning toolkit). Make sure to include the name and phone number of a contact person from your organization to answer any additional questions.

At the conclusion of any press event, invite members of the media to raise questions and interview participants. After your event, place follow-up calls to media to answer any additional questions they may have. Finally, make sure to send thank-you notes to non-media attendees following the event.

How Can I Use a Community Forum to Spread the *Recovery Month* Message?

A community forum consists of a panel of community leaders brought together to discuss a specific issue—in this case, alcohol and drug use disorders and treatment. The panel could include public officials and civic leaders, local treatment providers, employers, health professionals, educators, the media, community leaders, members of the faith community, and individuals in recovery.

When planning this type of event, select an experienced moderator, such as a television anchor, professor, counselor, or clergyperson. The moderator's role is to keep the event moving on time and keep the discussion on topic. Moderators also perform introductions and facilitate the forum.

To enhance public interest in your forum, consider organizing it around a widely publicized event already taking place. Another option is to hold a legislative forum that has the support of a member of Congress, a state legislator, a civic leader, or other elected official. These government representatives attract media attention and strive to achieve support for policies and funding as well.

In addition to inviting newspaper reporters, you can contact local television, radio, or cable stations prior to your community forum to investigate the possibility of airing the forum in its entirety, either live or taped. Broadcasting your forum on the Internet through your organization's Web site is another way to spread the message to people who did not attend the forum in person.



PROMOTIONAL EVENT IDEAS

MEDIA OUTREACH

Tips for Planning Events:

- Select a specific topic for your forum or press event.
- Avoid competing with other organizations' **Recovery Month** activities by coordinating the times and dates with your colleagues, and posting and cross-checking them on the calendar of local events posted on the **Recovery Month** Web site at www.recoverymonth.gov. You also may cross-check the calendar of events listed by the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at www.ncadi.samhsa.gov/calendar. Coordinate your activities with those of your colleagues when possible.
- To increase media attention, select a location of interest, such as a park, public building (public grounds require special permits), or treatment center, rather than a location that few people in the community would recognize. The media is more likely to attend your event if it is held at a location that they believe their audiences can identify with, and that is visually appealing to maximize photo opportunities.
- Select a forum moderator.
- Compile and contact a list of participants and speakers. Provide speakers with an agenda and time limit for their remarks—keep the remarks brief. Obtain copies of the remarks in advance to ensure that a variety of points and perspectives are covered and that different speakers' remarks do not overlap.
- Send local media an advisory in advance of the event and fax or e-mail a press release on the day of the event (samples are included in this planning toolkit).
- Follow up with calls to the media to encourage coverage of the event. After the event, collect clips of the media coverage you garnered for future use. You also can share the success of your media outreach by completing the Customer Satisfaction Form enclosed in this planning toolkit.

When planning events, remember that the unexpected can happen. Your ability to plan for contingencies is critical to the success of your event. Some additional things to keep in mind include:

- Outdoor events can be weather-dependent. Have a back-up venue or a rain date.
- If your guest list expands, make sure you have adequate seating for all participants.
- Speakers can be delayed, get sick, or have last-minute conflicts. Have a back-up speaker or revised agenda.

15TH ANNUAL

National Alcohol
& Drug Addiction
Recovery Month

SEPTEMBER 2004



PROMOTIONAL EVENT IDEAS

MEDIA OUTREACH

- Check all audiovisual equipment to make sure it is in proper working order and that those running the equipment know how to use it.
- Arrange for speakers and participants to arrive early. If the media will be present, discuss talking points with speakers to ensure they remain on the event topic.

What Other Activities Can Help Spread the *Recovery Month* Message?

Health Fairs. Coordinate with other organizations to sponsor a health fair that addresses multiple health-related issues. Have booths for local treatment centers to offer information and speak about how they help people in your community. Offer informational materials for those who might be in need of treatment or know of someone who could benefit from it, and invite local civic and appointed officials and community leaders to speak on alcohol or drug use disorder topics. Encourage families to attend the fair by incorporating health-related games, activities, and giveaways into the event.

Exhibit Booths. Set up an exhibit booth at a local hospital, health fair, or wellness event to disseminate information about effective treatment options and related subjects.

Recovery Saturday or Sunday. Coordinate with faith leaders for a Recovery Saturday or Sunday, a time when religious leaders make recovery the topic of their sermons/homilies. Discuss the importance of treatment and recovery and the impact on the individual, family members, and the community. Faith leaders can identify ways to help their congregations better understand the nature and impact of alcohol and drug addiction within families.

Athletic Activities. Get involved in local sports at the high school or college level. Work with the schools and coaches to educate students on the dangers of steroids and other performance-enhancing drugs. Coordinate a recovery walk/run or marathon, basketball or tennis tournament, or similar event. Hosting activities of this nature will provide a positive outlet for all members of the community, bringing them together to celebrate *Recovery Month*.

High School Assemblies. Coordinate with the principals of local high schools to host assemblies that discuss alcohol and drug use disorders, their warning signs, and the importance of treatment and recovery for the health of individuals, family, friends, and the community. Consider inviting youth in recovery to share personal stories at the assembly.

Banners/Ads. Display banners or ads promoting September as *Recovery Month* in your community's most visible areas and outdoor venues, including outdoor billboards and public transportation ads.

15TH ANNUAL

National Alcohol
& Drug Addiction
Recovery Month

SEPTEMBER 2004



PROMOTIONAL EVENT IDEAS

MEDIA OUTREACH

Workplace Partnerships. Contact the major employers in your area and ask them to partner with you in promoting the messages of **Recovery Month** to their employees. Ask them to adopt Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) for their employees and hang **Recovery Month** posters in areas where employees congregate.

Business and Volunteer Organization Distribution Channels. You can capitalize on local organizations' existing channels for communicating with the general public by placing advertisements about an upcoming event in an organization's newsletter, church bulletin, or in the windows of local stores and restaurants. Ask local businesses to display banners in prominent areas seen by the general public.

Media Sponsorships. Approach local newspapers, radio stations, and television outlets to ask them to consider serving as a "sponsor" of your **Recovery Month** event by allowing you to place their logo on materials promoting your event. A media sponsorship enhances your event's credibility by showing that local media support it. Typically, only one media outlet will agree to sponsor your event, but other media outlets in your area are likely to attend and cover your event as well.

Television Partnerships. Approach local television station managers to partner in promoting **Recovery Month**. Ask the stations to list community treatment centers on their Web site and create a hot-link to your organization's Web site.

Radio Public Service Announcements. Disseminate the enclosed live-read public service announcements to promote drug and alcohol treatment on your local radio stations.

Radio Outreach. Coordinate with a local radio personality and/or station manager to promote your **Recovery Month** event and to mention key messages on the air. Radio is a powerful tool for your outreach because most stations appeal to a certain demographic (audience segment). Take advantage of this by marketing your event to an appropriate and specific audience, such as college or modern rock stations for a college health fair or sports stations for an athletic event.

Articles. Write a short article that discusses both the long- and short-term benefits of treating alcohol and drug use disorders. Include information that drives people to a Web site or a telephone number for more information or help in locating a treatment center. Contact local magazines and weekly newspapers personally to introduce them to **Recovery Month** and ask them to run your article.

Finally, make sure that for all planned activities, you have materials available with information and phone numbers people can contact regarding treatment programs.



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MEDIA OUTREACH

You are encouraged to share your plans and activities for *Recovery Month* 2004 with SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, your colleagues, and the general public by posting them on the official *Recovery Month* Web site at www.recoverymonth.gov.

We would like to know about your outreach efforts and community success stories during *Recovery Month*. Please complete the Customer Satisfaction Form enclosed in the kit. Directions are included on the form.

Please send any of your organization's *Recovery Month* promotional samples to:
Office of the Director, Consumer Affairs, Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, SAMHSA, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockwall Building II, Rockville, MD 20857.

For additional *Recovery Month* materials, visit our Web site at www.recoverymonth.gov or call 1-800-662-HELP.

15TH ANNUAL

National Alcohol
& Drug Addiction
Recovery Month

SEPTEMBER 2004